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HELPING OUR 4-H CLUB TO ORGANIZE

A radio talk by Edwin Lowe, club boy, Norwich, Connecticut, delivered in the 4-H club period of the National Farm and Home Hour, Saturday, January 7, 1933, broadcast by a network of 58 associate NBC radio stations.

Some five years ago my attention was called forcibly to the work of the 4-H club by an older brother, who was then a member, winning ribbons and prizes, entering judging contests and winning trips around the country, not to mention telling me from morning till night how to raise chickens properly. Competition between brothers is sometimes keen, you know. An ambition was born right then to be a bigger and better 4-H worker than even he.

In due course of time I became an active member. I have given quite a number of public demonstrations, exhibited garden products, handicraft and poultry, and have won many prizes in my locality. Desiring to see club work available to more young people, two years ago I became a club leader.

Living near a small rural school, I entered into the games during the noon hours and between times casually talked of 4-H club work good times, etc., to see if enough were interested to form a club. The children all seemed in favor of a garden club. The next important step was to enlist the parents' interest in such a plan, for their cooperation is very important to successful club work, and a good way to obtain this is to visit the homes of prospective members. The teacher of the school gave us the Nature Study period twice a month for our meetings which were held in the schoolroom with the County Club Agent attending whenever he could do so. Although this club was organized at the school, most 4-H clubs in Connecticut are organized at the home of the local leader or some member.

When organizing a 4-H club it is desirable to review the club requirements to make sure that every prospective member understands what is expected of him. It is important, too, that the member should have a reasonable chance of success with his home project. A home visit and conference with the parents help with these points.

The election of officers is the first step in any club. We tried, of course, to select those best fitted for the offices. The president should be the one with the most "pep", who exerts the greatest influence on the members, and is most able to conduct the meetings in an orderly manner. The vice-president should be a good understudy for the president. The secretary should write clearly and be dependable, as good records are very important in club work. In our Connecticut 4-H clubs the treasurer's office is frequently combined with that of the secretary.

The news reporter is another essential in a successful club. He is chosen by the members and his job is to give proper publicity in the local newspapers to the work being done by the club and its members. Names are mentioned in the case of outstanding work, and each person strives to be worthy of mention in the local newspaper.

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The question of a club name comes next. Something "catchy" as well as typical of the nature of the club should be chosen by the members. For example, we call our club the "Weedless Garden Club." This gives each member an incentive to have a weedless garden.

The club leader, whose duty it is to see that the club is conducted in the proper manner, holds no office, and takes no real part in the meetings unless requested. The leader is chosen by the members and in most cases, as in mine, he is the person who starts the movement for the formation of a club. This is not compulsory however.

Before developing a club program, each member selects a goal for the year. For instance, one garden club member may raise vegetables for exhibition and prizes, another for home use, another to sell, and so on. The club goal may be the composite goal of the members, although we really put our goal in the name of the club.

We worked out our program around the needs and desires of members, trying to have a business session, checking records, subject-matter talks, and demonstrations, and recreation at each meeting. By carefully planning a program with the members they can be given a good idea of the year's work.

The social activities of a club are also important. After school closed our club met at the homes of the various members to see what each was accomplishing. At the end of the business meeting, a song leader who was chosen by vote of the club, conducted a song fest to which we always looked forward. The host usually springs a little surprise in the way of a treat or refreshments, and everyone goes home happy.

I have enjoyed my many 4-H club experiences, especially this opportunity to tell you my ideas about organizing a 4-H club. My personal experience in this work, as a member and leader, convinces me that any boy or girl entering 4-H club work, and who subscribed to our National motto "To Make the Best Better", is starting on the right road to good citizenship, by "clearer thinking, greater loyalty, larger service and better living for the club, community and country."
